



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

*"To protect and improve
the health and environment
of the people of Colorado"*

NEWS

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Mayor Hickenlooper Featured in New Childhood Vaccination PSA: Mayor's Infant Son Was Hospitalized with Vaccine Preventable Disease

DENVER - Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper is featured in a new Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment public service announcement that promotes the use of childhood vaccinations. In the announcement, which can be viewed at <http://vimeo.com/4178441>, the mayor discusses how in 2002 his then 4-month-old son Teddy was hospitalized due to pertussis, a vaccine preventable disease often referred to as whooping cough.

"Our son Teddy had just started vaccinations when he was exposed to whooping cough, a vaccine preventable disease," the Mayor says in the public service announcement. "He became very sick and spent two nights in the hospital. I urge you to talk to your doctor about vaccines. Make an informed choice for your family and our community."

Teddy contracted the disease through exposure to a child who was new to the country and hadn't yet been fully vaccinated. The frightening experience underscored for the Mayor and his family that when we vaccinate our own children, we protect all children.

The public service announcement is being released now by the Department of Public Health and Environment ahead of National Infant Immunization Week, April 25 to May 2.

"We appreciate the support of Mayor Hickenlooper as we work to improve our childhood vaccination rates," said Ned Calonge, M.D., chief medical officer for the department. "Vaccines are a safe and cost-effective way to protect our children, and the wider community, from disease. However, there still are some parents who don't vaccinate their children due to fears of adverse events, such as autism. Numerous studies of millions of children in several countries, including the United States, have demonstrated there is no connection between vaccines and autism. Parents should know that the benefits of avoiding potentially fatal vaccine preventable diseases far outweigh potential adverse affects."

A recent Feb. 12 New York Times editorial made the same point: "A special federal vaccine court issued three devastating verdicts...that should help demolish lingering fears that childhood vaccines can and have caused autism."

While immunization rates are improving in Colorado, recent cases of vaccine preventable diseases around the country do concern health officials. In Minnesota this year, there have been five childhood cases of Hib, Haemophilus influenza type b. Of those, three of the children were not vaccinated against the disease and one died. Four Colorado children died from complications of influenza during the current flu season that is just now wrapping up. Flu is another vaccine-preventable illness. Finally, a 2008 measles outbreak in San Diego associated with lack of immunization sickened 11 children.

An analysis of Colorado statistics indicates that poor children are most likely not fully vaccinated. Nationally, more than one million children are not adequately immunized, and hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent on the care of disease-stricken children whose illnesses could have been avoided through immunizations.

Between 1996 and 2005, 208 adults and 32 children in Colorado died of diseases that most likely could have been prevented by vaccinations. In 2005, the following vaccine-preventable diseases were reported among children from birth

through 19 years of age:

- 901 cases of whooping cough (pertussis)
- 249 influenza-related hospitalizations
- 71 cases of invasive Streptococcus Pneumonia
- 12 cases of invasive meningococcal disease

In Colorado, parents interested in learning more about childhood vaccinations can visit the Colorado Children's Immunization Coalition Web site at www.childrensimmunization.org or call the Department of Public Health and Environment's CO-HELP line at 877-462-2911 for a list of flu vaccination clinics.